

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

September 5, 1962

FILE

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Cuba

I know very little about the present state of our Cuban policy. However, as an old Cuba hand, it seems to me that there are exceedingly dangerous potentialities in the existing situation -- particularly when I read intelligence reports describing plans for an uprising inside Cuba in the next few weeks.

It is bad enough for the Soviet Union to be moving into Cuba in force. But we can live with this for a time, especially as we begin to devise visible countermeasures. But, if an internal uprising of Cuban patriots should take place in the next few weeks against the Castro regime, then the United States will be confronted with the immediate choice of (a) going to its support, or (b) of not going to its support.

If such an internal uprising took place and we went to its support, we would find ourselves in a difficult war in which, so far as we can presently tell, the majority of Cubans (and very likely the majority of the nations of the world) would be against us. Cuba would become our Algeria.

If we did not go to its support, we would be charged with betraying our friends and letting them be slaughtered by a brutal dictatorship; our world prestige would suffer a terrific blow. Our failure to act in Cuba would be far worse than our failure to act in Hungary in 1956.

It need hardly be pointed out that the fall campaign vastly heightens the pressures and emotions surrounding the Cuban issue. Alternative (b) would be particularly hard to defend in a campaign atmosphere.

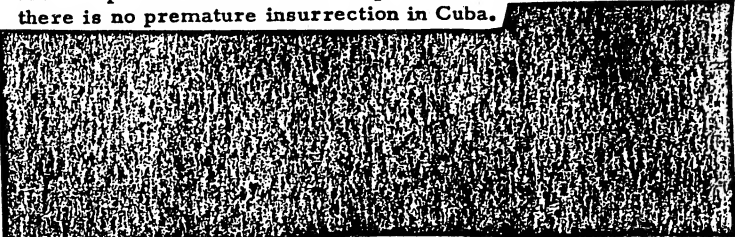
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All this points to the absolute importance of making sure that there is no premature insurrection in Cuba.



It is indispensable to be sure that no one down the line is encouraging the Cubans into rash action. Such action would not only confront the government with an intolerable political choice but would expose and condemn brave Cubans, give Castro a pretext for drastic internal repression, and very likely set back the chances of successful action for months or years.



Arthur Schlesinger, jr.